

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2009

Chairman Nick Rahall
Committee on Natural Resources
1323 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We write this letter to ask that the Natural Resources Committee hold a hearing on the growing threat to federal lands from criminal activities, most notably the large scale cultivation, production and trafficking in illegal narcotics. The land management agencies candidly admit that the size and scope of the problem are so great that they are unable to control the situation.

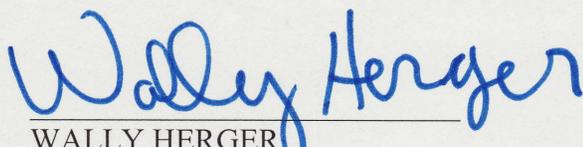
We are especially troubled by the failure of the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to bolster enforcement efforts. Since a number of federal policies and land management practices contribute to the likelihood of narcotic traffickers choosing federal lands for their activities, it is unfair to saddle local law enforcement with the problem.

Protection of those who visit or work on public land and protection of the land and resources are the most basic responsibility of our land management agencies. DOI and the Forest Service must make sure these lands are safe and secure for public use before venturing into additional activities.

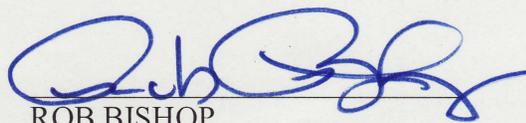
This problem is pervasive, especially for lands in the West. In California, criminal cartels are running large scale marijuana cultivation operations on National Forests where hikers who stumble on their operations are met by a guard toting an AK-47 rifle. In Arizona, from the Coronado National Forest to the Ironwood National Monument, rare plants and wildlife are being harmed by the actions and trash of traffickers to carry bundles of narcotics across the border on foot and by vehicles. Just this summer alone on federal lands in California, Utah and Colorado several tons of drugs were seized.

We request that a hearing be held to hear from the agencies and outside experts about the threats to these resources and to those who work in or visit these lands and what Congress must do to correct the problem. Surely the Natural Resources Committee can find time to have a hearing on such a serious topic this year.

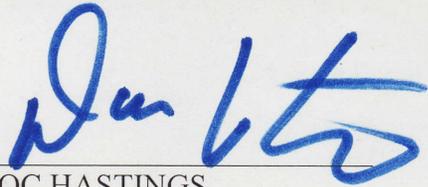
Sincerely,



WALLY HERGER
Member of Congress



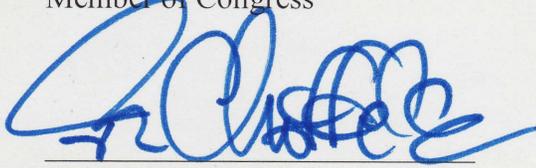
ROB BISHOP
Member of Congress



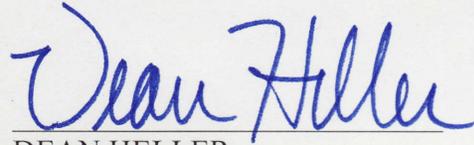
DOC HASTINGS
Member of Congress



CYNTHIA LUMMIS
Member of Congress



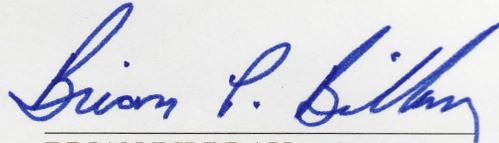
JASON CHAFFETZ
Member of Congress



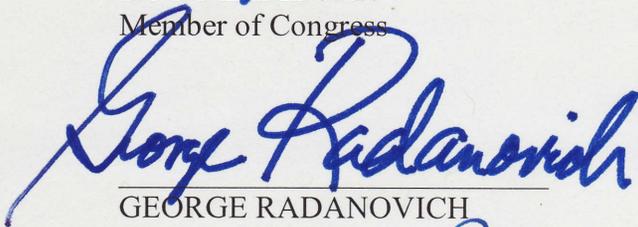
DEAN HELLER
Member of Congress



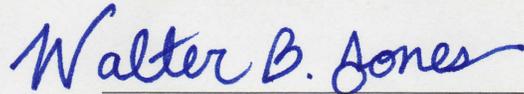
DOUG LAMBORN
Member of Congress



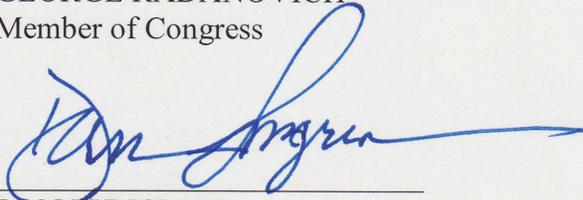
BRIAN BILBRAY
Member of Congress



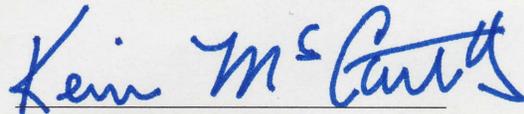
GEORGE RADANOVICH
Member of Congress



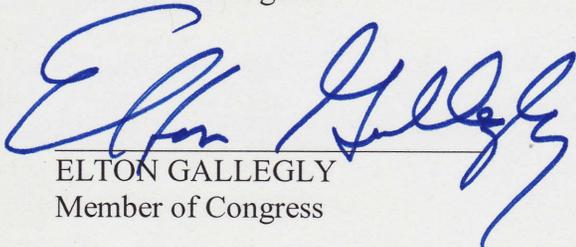
WALTER B. JONES
Member of Congress



DAN LUNGREN
Member of Congress



KEVIN McCARTHY
Member of Congress



ELTON GALLEGLY
Member of Congress